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DOCUMENTAÇÃO

IGGI chairman, Minister Jan Pronk, visits Indonesia

The nine-day visit of Jan Pronk, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, to Indonesia, from 5-14 April, was even more high profile than his visit seventeen years ago which acted as the catalyst for the January 1974 student unrest. The following summary is based on press coverage in the Netherlands and Indonesia:

Events prior to the visit

Jan Pronk visited Indonesia as chair of the IGGI (Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia), a position held *ex officio* by the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation. Before the visit, events in Indonesia had created tension in Dutch-Indonesian relations. In February, four long-term political prisoners were executed and another six were reportedly to be executed in March; a wave of protests swept Holland, in Parliament, in public rallies and in the media. In an unprecedented move, Pronk suspended part of a special aid programme, the first time sanctions were used against Indonesia for its record on human rights.

Officially the link between aid and human rights has been an integral part of Dutch government policy since the mid seventies, but implementation has been patchy. Demands in Parliament that the government abandon the policy of silent diplomacy persuaded Pronk to take more positive action. His decision to suspend some of the aid was widely supported in Parliament, not only by his own party, the PvdA (Dutch Labour Party) but by parties right across the political spectrum.

One difficult in pursuing a policy to link human rights with economic sanctions is the question of ministerial responsibility. The issue of human rights falls within the competence of the Foreign Minister, Hans van den Broek who has always been an advocate of silent diplomacy. (Van den Broek is now serving his third term as Foreign Minister.) As a result, the Pronk initiative was not fully backed by the cabinet, a coalition between the CDA (Christian Democrats) van den Broek's party, and PvdA. Less than a year old, the cabinet can be expected to avoid splitting over the issue.

In March, after an announcement that the clemency plea of Asep Suryaman, a death-row prisoner, had been turned down, van den Broek made representations to the Indonesian Government not to go ahead; Pronk refrained from saying anything, holding his fire until he was in Indonesia. The weekend before his departure, he addressed a seminar where he re-affirmed his support for linking aid to human rights. Before his departure it was announced that his itinerary would include meetings with human rights activists. As he left Holland, a group of Indonesians started a hunger strike in a central square in Amsterdam.

The atmosphere in Jakarta

In Jakarta interest in Pronk's visit was intense. Seldom has a foreign visitor been given such extensive press coverage. All aspects were discussed, the executions, the linkage between human rights and aid and the prospects of IGGI aid. For the Indonesian government, Pronk's stand had come as something of a shock. The previous three Dutch ministers who chaired IGGI, de Koning, Schoo and Bukman, were middle-of-the-road politicians who saw IGGI purely as a financial consortium with no interest in social or human rights. Technocrats like Finance Minister J.B. Sumarlin, chairman of the National Planning Board, Saleh Afiff, and

State Secretary Murdiono voiced concern at the possibility of aid cuts. A few days before Pronk's arrival, *Editor* devoted its lead story to the executions and the Pronk visit. From some quarters came the suggestion that if Pronk was planning to transform IGGI into a human rights forum, it should move to Washington, the seat of the World Bank.

Pronk's visit in 1973 as IGGI chair was marked by many incidents. Student protestors demonstrated against Indonesia's increasing dependence on foreign aid. History has repeated itself in 1990. Human rights activists in Yogya and Jakarta greeted Pronk with banners linking IGGI aid to human rights abuses. A student delegation delivered a statement for Minister Pronk to the Dutch embassy in Jakarta, expressing dissatisfaction with the IGGI and the harmful effects of economic aid. Pronk received several statements about human rights abuses including one from LPHAM, the Institute for the Defence of Human Rights and one from INFIGHT, the Indonesian Front for the Defence of Human Rights.

The executions and human rights in general were discussed in meetings with some Indonesian ministers. With Justice Minister Maj. General Ismael Saleh, one of those responsible for the executions, Pronk also raised the question of the harsh sentences passed against Bandung students for protesting against General Rudini's visit to their campus, and the cases of two Yogya students who received seven and eight years for selling books by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and participating in discussions. Ismael Saleh will again be confronted with these problems when he visits the Dutch Parliament in May. With Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, Pronk raised the matter of executions and received the standard answer, that human rights are influenced by the social, political, economic and cultural values in each country.

Throughout his visit, media attention was intense, in Holland as well as in Indonesia. On economic matters, Pronk was full of praise for Indonesia's economic performance; he indicated that special assistance would probably decline due to Indonesia's improved foreign trade position. He was complimentary about health and education but criticised the debt service ratio of 40%. Besides inspecting development projects, he visited the slums of North Jakarta, refusing to talk to people selected by officials and instead asked a garbage worker about his wages. Pronk came over as a minister not interested in sticking to official protocol and rather unconventional in his manner.

Indonesian ministers were clearly determined to make the best of Pronk's visit. Foreign Minister Alatas went out of his way to assure everyone that it was not the intention of the Dutch to link aid to human rights, still less with the executions. None of the generals said anything while Pronk was in Indonesia about foreigners 'meddling in our internal affairs'. It was as if Suharto had instructed everyone to adopt a softly-softly approach; this must have come as a relief to the technocrats. Pronk hinted that IGGI aid this year would be even higher than last year. In 1989, IGGI allocated a total of US$4.3 billion in aid. The most attractive part of this packet was the component called 'special assistance', amounting to US$1.8; it is not tied to any project but earmarked for quick disbursement to help provide rupiah funding for projects. Pronk hinted that special assistance would decline this year and there are signs that it may be phased out altogether in the next year or two.

The Indonesian media spoke quite favourably of Pronk. After his morning stroll in the slums, *Kompas* commented on 11 April that Pronk should be welcomed as representing a new 'humanist' trend in the industrial world. Frankness, openness, concern about global affairs like pollution, social justice, democracy and the inequality of wealth in the world today seemed to be the hallmark, it said. *Editor*, which a week earlier had been reprimanded by the Information Department for its coverage of Pronk and the executions, carried an interview with him on 14 April, in which he stressed the universality of human rights.

There were words of welcome even from Indonesia's rubber-stamp parliament (DPR). John Naro, DPR vice-chairman, said the government should open itself to criticism especially if it was constructive. Other DPR members voiced similar sentiments. At the beginning of his visit Pronk publicly criticised the DPR. A DPR mission which visited the Dutch Parliament in February had been closely questioned by all the Dutch political parties about the DPR's inaction regarding human rights, including the imminent threat of executions. Pronk was clearly annoyed when, during his visit to the DPR, he was told that the delegation to Holland had not yet reported its discussion with Dutch parliamentarians. He was told that Indonesian MPs regarded the executions as being a matter for jurists. He said he could not understand why Indonesian MPs knew nothing about a World Bank study on poverty in Indonesia. It was not the custom, he was told, for Parliament to discuss such reports.

No water-tight guarantees

Meetings with representatives of human rights organisations proceeded as planned; the groups gave the Dutch minister petitions confronting him with clear examples of human rights abuses. The petition of the Institute for the Defence of Human Rights [see below] states that the Indonesian people are not allowed to complain about increasing violence by the government. IGGI aid benefits the government of Indonesia as it allows the authorities to collaborate closely with big business and to violate human rights with impunity. LPHAM director Princen called on Minister Pronk to link aid with respect for human rights.

Late in the evening of 13 April, Pronk went to the office of INFIGHT, the Indonesian Front for the Defense of Human Rights, where he was handed a 27-page document. The hard-hitting document addresses the question of human rights in a general sense and argues that the kind of development supported by IGGI has brought misery to many millions and has uprooted people from their land. The vast majority still live in poverty, unemployment is very high while the press is silenced in the name of economic stability. During the meeting, Pronk was introduced to victims of repression who told him about their sufferings. Pronk has promised to circulate the petition and other documents from these groups to the IGGI member states. [Extracts from this document are reproduced below.]

From the outset, Pronk's priority as far as human rights was concerned, was to prevent the six executions. On 9 April, he said he was sure that the suspension of aid had helped postpone the killings although he had not been given a firm guarantee by the government that the executions were definitely off. A day later Pronk announced a new international initiative aimed at preventing the Indonesian government from implementing the death sentences. EC countries and other states would be involved. So far no details are available but Pronk gave an assurance that the pressure on the Indonesian government would be stepped up. Initially Pronk said he would disclose more details of his diplomatic demarche by the end of the week but disappointed many by failing to do so. His promised demarche may have been delayed by the time needed to reach agreement in the Dutch cabinet and to secure the full collaboration of other IGGI or EC countries.

On his return home, Pronk went straight to the ten hunger-strikers and told them that although he had not been given a water-tight guarantee that the executions would not go ahead, he believed that the Indonesian authorities are listening carefully to the voice of the Dutch public. The hunger strikers decided to end their strike but pledged to continue their efforts and demands on future occasions in a different way.

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